United Nations A/71/215

General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 19 of the provisional agenda*
Sustainable development

Implementation of World Wildlife Day

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/205, the Secretary-General hereby transmits the report prepared by the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

* A/71/150.

16-13010 (E) 100816

Please recycle

I. Background

1. The world's wildlife, whether well known or obscure, is facing many threats and challenges. The greatest threats to wildlife are habitat loss, overgrazing, farming and unsustainable patterns of development. Nevertheless, poaching and trafficking in wildlife, driven by transnational organized crime groups, pose the most immediate threat to many iconic species, including elephants, pangolins, rhinoceros, sharks, tigers and precious tree species.

2. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora is an international agreement between Governments. Its aim is to ensure that the international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. In paragraph 203 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (see General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex), Member States recognized the continued importance of the Convention in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the economic, social and environmental impacts of the illicit trafficking in wildlife:

> We recognize the important role of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international agreement that stands at the intersection between trade, the environment and development, promotes the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, should contribute to tangible benefits for local people and ensures that no species entering into international trade is threatened with extinction. We recognize the economic, social and environmental impacts of illicit trafficking in wildlife, where firm and strengthened action needs to be taken on both the supply and demand sides. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of effective international cooperation among relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international organizations. We further stress the importance of basing the listing of species on agreed criteria.

3. In considering that the establishment of a World Wildlife Day would help to provide a useful means of promoting international and national actions in the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife and of raising public awareness, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at its 16th meeting, held in Bangkok in 2013, unanimously adopted resolution Conf. 16.1. In the resolution, the Conference of the Parties declared 3 March, the day in 1973 on which the Convention was signed, as World Wildlife Day. In the same resolution, the Conference of the Parties invited the General Assembly to consider declaring 3 March as World Wildlife Day.

4. The General Assembly, at its sixty-eighth session, adopted resolution 68/205, in which it proclaimed 3 March as World Wildlife Day. In the resolution, the Assembly requested the secretariat of the Convention, in collaboration with relevant organizations of the United Nations system, to facilitate the implementation of World Wildlife Day, which it has done for each of the three observances of the day held to date, within its existing financial resources.

II. Observance of World Wildlife Day in 2014, 2015 and 2016

Inaugural World Wildlife Day 2014

5. In preparation for the launch of the inaugural World Wildlife Day in 2014, the secretariat of the Convention commissioned a graphic designer to create a dedicated logo, which was subsequently translated into the six official languages of the United Nations (see annex to the present report). The logo is used to brand the initiatives undertaken to celebrate World Wildlife Day and to help to inspire worldwide celebrations.

6. A website dedicated to World Wildlife Day was developed by the secretariat to raise awareness and to provide all relevant background information, outreach materials, official statements and relevant links and information from partners. The secretariat also created dedicated channels for the Day on the main social media platforms to maximize the reach of the celebrations. In addition, it produced a brochure for the celebration of the inaugural World Wildlife Day.

7. The inaugural World Wildlife Day was launched at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 3 March 2014 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The event was attended by the then President of the Swiss Confederation, Didier Burkhalter; the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Hugo Swire; the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Thani Thongphakdi; the Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, John E. Scanlon; and the founding President of the Goodplanet Foundation, Yann Arthus-Bertrand. An exhibition of photos by celebrated wildlife photographers was held at the same venue to coincide with the launch of the Day.

8. In his message for the inaugural World Wildlife Day, the Secretary-General of the United Nations highlighted the environmental, economic and social consequences of wildlife crime and urged all sectors of society to end illegal wildlife trafficking and commit themselves to trading and using wild plants and animals sustainably and equitably. The Secretary-General of the Convention and many others also released a short video statement on the Day.

9. The secretariat received more than 50 messages of support from United Nations organizations, other intergovernmental organizations, multilateral environmental agreements, non-governmental organizations and celebrities, all of which were posted on the World Wildlife Day website.

10. The Permanent Missions of Germany and Thailand to the United Nations in New York organized a side event on the occasion of World Wildlife Day at Headquarters, to which the Secretary-General of the Convention had provided a video message.

11. Countries and people around the world embraced World Wildlife Day in various ways, exceeding all expectations, in particular given that there were only two months in which to undertake preparations after the adoption on 20 December 2013 of General Assembly resolution 68/205, in which the Assembly proclaimed 3 March as World Wildlife Day. The celebrations included wildlife art exhibitions, a symposium on wildlife conservation, a televised talk show, a street parade, the

issuance of stamps, an open-door concert, painting competitions, a wildlife awareness contest, the release of captive animals to the wild, the appointment of wildlife ambassadors and the launch of a new campaign against wildlife trafficking.

World Wildlife Day 2015

12. At the request of the secretariat, and in order to actively involve parties and observers in the process, a World Wildlife Day working group was established at the 65th meeting of its Standing Committee in order to identify, compile and formulate ideas on how best to celebrate future editions of the Day.

13. The members of the working group are: Bahrain, Botswana (Chair), Brazil, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guyana, Italy, Kuwait, Peru, Portugal, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda and the United States of America, as well as the Convention on Migratory Species, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Species Survival Network, TRAFFIC and the Wildlife Conservation Society. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Tourism Organization joined the working group at a later date. The secretariat thanks the Chair and all members of the working group for their support.

14. For the second observance of World Wildlife Day, the theme introduced in consultation with the working group was "It's time to get serious about wildlife crime". In addition, the working group agreed to adopt the logo produced for World Wildlife Day in 2014 as the official logo for the celebration in 2015.

15. In his statement for World Wildlife Day 2015, the Secretary-General of the United Nations highlighted that:

> Illegal wildlife trade undermines the rule of law and threatens national security; it degrades ecosystems and is a major obstacle to the efforts of rural communities and indigenous peoples striving to sustainably manage their natural resources. Combating this crime is not only essential for conservation efforts and sustainable development, it will contribute to achieving peace and security in troubled regions where conflicts are fuelled by these illegal activities.

The Secretary-General of the Convention and many others also released a short video statement on the Day. The then President of the General Assembly hosted a special commemorative session at Headquarters on 4 March, at which Member States and the global community examined the challenges to and opportunities for stepping up international efforts to combat wildlife crime on a global scale. The then President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General, Chelsea Clinton, actress Nadya Hutagalung and the Secretary-General of the Convention were on the panel.

16. More than 100 representatives of Member States, development organizations, civil society, the private sector and the media attended an event at the Central Park Zoo in New York. The event included statements by high-level speakers and a moderated panel discussion. Welcoming remarks were provided by the Director for Sustainable Development at UNDP, Nik Sekhran, and the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Wildlife Conservation Society, Cristián Samper. Joint remarks were offered by the then Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of

Gabon to the United Nations, Marianne Bibalou, the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Harald Braun, and the then Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Thailand to the United Nations, Chayapan Bamrungphong. Opening remarks were given by the Secretary-General of the Convention and the then President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, Oyun Sanjaasuren. The panel discussion explored the links between the illegal wildlife trade, crime and sustainable development. The European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, offered a video statement to recognize the importance of addressing wildlife crime. Several public service announcements demonstrated the power of celebrity voices and highlighted the plights of elephants, great apes and other species. The secretariat expressed its appreciation to the Wildlife Conservation Society for hosting the event and to all Member States and organizations for their participation.

17. The secretariat, in association with the Geneva Environment Network, International Geneva, the Geneva Airport, the Natural History Museum of Geneva and the newspaper *Le Temps*, and with the generous support of the Swiss Confederation and the Embassy of the United States of America, organized a symposium on the occasion of World Wildlife Day 2015 under the theme "Wild and precious: conservation in the twenty-first century".

18. On 3 March, the secretariat and relevant organizations in the United Nations system issued a joint press release on World Wildlife Day.

19. UNODC generously contributed by developing a full social media campaign package to raise awareness of the scope and severity of wildlife crime, in close cooperation with the secretariat and the working group. The package was also picked up by other United Nations and non-United Nations organizations. The hashtags used on social media were #SeriousAboutWildlifeCrime, #WorldWildlifeDay and #WildlifeCrime. The campaign was a great success, with a combined reach of close to 190 million people.

20. The celebration of World Wildlife Day 2015 around the world under the theme "It's time to get serious about wildlife crime" helped to further pave the way for the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/314 on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, in which the Assembly welcomed the international observance of the Day.

World Wildlife Day 2016

21. The third World Wildlife Day was celebrated under the theme "The future of wildlife is in our hands", with the sub-theme "The future of elephants is in our hands". The themes were once again chosen in consultation with the working group and reinforced the inextricable link between wildlife, people and sustainable development. The themes conveyed the message that human beings hold the future of all wildlife in their hands and that failure to take action will have immediate, sometimes devastating, consequences for species of animals and plants. The sub-theme gives recognition to the serious challenges facing African and Asian elephants.

22. A new World Wildlife Day website with a powerful and appealing interface and rich content was created by the secretariat in collaboration with a designer recruited through the United Nations Volunteers programme. The website offers

suggestions to the general public on ways to become involved and to support the celebration of the Day and provides a user-friendly way for countries, organizations and private individuals to register events online. It also provides various materials, including posters, logos, shout-out cards, powerful short videos (public service announcements) and social media kits for use in their celebrations.

23. While continuing to organize high-level events, the secretariat began to place greater focus on further mobilizing countries and people around the world to embrace and celebrate World Wildlife Day at the national level by reaching out to specific countries and organizing colourful and participatory activities in order to reach a wider audience.

24. Events in 80 countries were registered on the World Wildlife Day website, ranging from a lecture on wildlife conservation in a primary school near the Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda to a high-level event at the State Department in Washington, D.C. There has been a considerable increase in the number of events since 2015, reflecting how rapidly the international community has embraced the Day.

25. More than 160 powerful films were entered into the International Elephant Film Festival, which was organized jointly by the secretariat and the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival as part of the activities to celebrate World Wildlife Day. The winners in seven categories were announced on 3 March at Headquarters. The film festival greatly amplified the global calls to stop the poaching of elephants and the illicit trafficking in elephant ivory.

26. More than 320 inspirational posters were submitted for the World Wildlife Day poster design competition, organized jointly by the secretariat and the Department of Environmental Affairs of South Africa, which sponsored the competition. The three winners will be awarded flight tickets for travel to Johannesburg, South Africa, to attend the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in September 2016.

27. The social media campaign was a great success. The hashtags #WorldWildlifeDay, #WWD2016 and #InOurHands in the English language alone attained a reach of 667 million impressions in only four days, representing an increase of close to 300 per cent compared with the previous year. While UNODC had led the social media campaign in 2015, the social media team of UNEP led the campaign in 2016, and provided generous support, as did other United Nations system organizations and other entities in promoting the celebration of World Wildlife Day on their own platforms.

28. Representatives of Governments, United Nations system organizations and other intergovernmental organizations, civil society, community-based groups and others gathered in The Hague, the Netherlands, to address the global challenge of wildlife crime at an international conference hosted by the Government of the Netherlands on the theme "Save wildlife: act now or game over". The Secretary-General of the Convention gave a keynote address at the event.

29. In addition, World Wildlife Day 2016 saw the European Union launch its new action plan to combat the illegal wildlife trade and major private companies pledge to crack down on wildlife trafficking.

30. On 3 March, the secretariat provided the latest update, through a press release, on trends in the illegal killing of elephants in 2015. According to data from Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants, poaching levels continued to pose an immediate risk to the survival of African elephants, with overall poaching trends in 2015 showing the Africa-wide elephant populations still in decline.

31. The celebration of World Wildlife Day 2016 reached its climax at United Nations Headquarters, where more than 400 participants representing Governments, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, civil society, wildlife filmmakers and celebrities gathered to celebrate the Day and to address the various challenges confronting both wildlife and people in the wider context of sustainable development. During the event, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat announced the imminent launch of the "One United Nations" campaign on the illegal wildlife trade. The Secretary-General of the Convention facilitated a high-level panel session, which included representatives of the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, UNDP, the Wildlife Conservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund, as well as an interaction with people from the audience, including the UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, Gisele Bündchen, and the well-known actress and conservationist Kristin Davis. UNDP played a leading role in organizing the event.

32. In his message for World Wildlife Day 2016, the Secretary-General of the United Nations warned that time was running out to save some of the world's most iconic species and that much more needed to be done by key actors on all continents and across sectors to combat poaching and address both the demand and supply of illegal wildlife products. The Secretary-General of the Convention and many others also released a short video statement.

III. Impact of World Wildlife Day

Raising public awareness

33. World Wildlife Day, as a new international day on the United Nations calendar, has been embraced immediately by countries, United Nations organizations and people around the world. Governments and international and national wildlife conservation organizations have used this unique opportunity to raise awareness of wildlife conservation among the general public. The various ways in which the Day has been observed, including wildlife art exhibitions, a symposium on wildlife conservation, televised talk shows, street parades, the issuance of stamps, open-door concerts, painting competitions, wildlife awareness contests, the release of captive animals to the wild, the appointment of wildlife ambassadors, the launch of a new campaign against the trafficking in wildlife, film festivals and poster competitions, have had a huge impact on people around the world.

34. In this regard, China's activities represent solid examples of highly successful national celebrations. Given that it is the world's most populous nation and that it is a megadiversity country, China, with its unique culture and tradition, also faces many challenges in wildlife conservation. The Government of China has joined the international community in observing World Wildlife Day since 2014, and the celebrations have been carried out on a nationwide scale and have had an impact.

Since 2014, the State Forestry Administration, the Management Authority on the Convention and the China Wildlife Conservation Association have jointly called on every province to observe the Day, and all provinces have responded positively each year. In 2016, the Day was celebrated in 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities in China. Public-awareness activities were carried out across the country, including symposiums and outdoor concerts and were promoted on street banners, television, the radio and the Internet.

35. In the age of the Internet, World Wildlife Day has become a social media phenomenon. Social media offers the most efficient and cost-effective way to promote the themes and messages related to the Day. Millions of people are joining the social media campaign each year. United Nations organizations, Governments, international and national conservation organizations, media organizations and sports and entertainment celebrities are all joining and supporting the social media campaign. A single public service announcement produced by UNODC on wildlife crime for World Wildlife Day 2016 was shared thousands of times in one day.

36. World Wildlife Day is fast becoming the biggest annual event on wildlife at the global level. Given that the young generation represents the future, efforts are now being made to encourage all countries around the world to make the observance of the Day an annual event in all schools and universities.

New opportunity for dialogue, partnership and cooperation

37. World Wildlife Day triggers discussions on the challenges facing wildlife and the concrete measures that should be taken by Governments and citizens to protect and sustainably use wildlife. New partnerships and cooperation are forged on the Day among countries and organizations.

Sparking political will and concrete actions

38. The theme of World Wildlife Day 2015 greatly raised awareness that the poaching of and trafficking in some of the world's most iconic species is often driven by transnational organized criminal groups, with an annual value up to $20 billion, ranking it among other serious transnational crimes, such as the trafficking in people and arms. The theme and the high-level event held at Headquarters helped to pave the way for the adoption by the General Assembly on 30 July 2015 of historic resolution 69/314, on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife.

39. In order to benefit from the impact of World Wildlife Day, Governments and conservation organizations have launched wildlife conservation campaigns and other important events on the Day. For example, Malawi launched its first high-profile campaign tackling wildlife crime on World Wildlife Day 2014 and the Netherlands organized an international conference on wildlife crime on World Wildlife Day 2016 in The Hague.

IV. Conclusion

40. The proclamation by the General Assembly of World Wildlife Day as an official United Nations international day has been welcomed by the world's

Governments and the wildlife conservation community. In the space of only three years, it is fast becoming the most important annual event in wildlife conservation at the global level. Furthermore, many international, regional and national events are being organized to coincide with the Day. The numerous events worldwide and the large number of people involved have demonstrated that the designation of the Day has been very timely, if not long overdue, and warmly welcomed around the world.

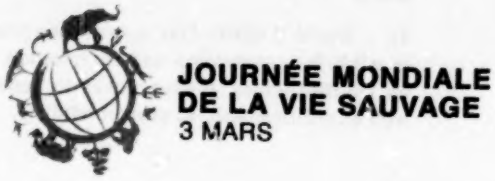
41. World Wildlife Day contributes greatly to the promotion of public awareness in wildlife conservation and the creation of opportunities for discussion and debate on wildlife issues. It also serves to generate new partnerships and cooperation, as well as political will, to protect wildlife.

Annex

Logo of World Wildlife Day

Arabic

French



Chinese

Russian

English

Spanish